

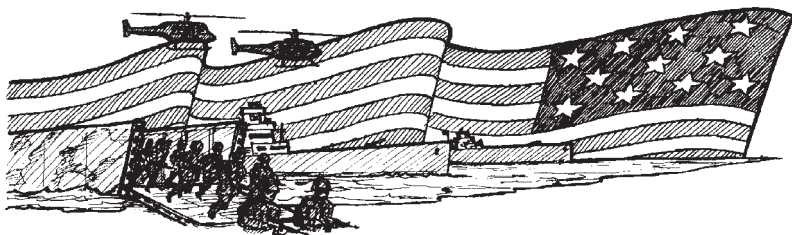


QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

*O*n the **ARMED INTERVENTION**

of U.S. troops in the Philippines

Prepared by the Information Bureau • Communist Party of the Philippines



1 WHAT IS THE BALIKATAN ?

Balikatan is the program of joint “military exercises”, which are annually undertaken by the armed forces of the Philippines and the US, on the basis of the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1951 (MDT) in the context of fighting “foreign threats.” Temporarily interrupted from 1992 to 1998 after the Military Bases Agreement was junked, the Balikatan exercises were resumed in 1998 when the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) was ratified.

Until 1999, the US and the reactionary Philippine government evaded public attention by holding discreet, small-scale training exercises of short duration. In 2000, a large-scale exercise involving 2,393 Filipino and 2,380 US soldiers was carried out in the provinces of Tarlac, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Zambales, Bataan, Cavite, and Palawan.

The Estrada government prated then that the training was meant to address the threat of foreign aggression. Oddly, it was launched in areas that were considered “critical.” In reality, the training was geared towards counter-guerrilla operations.

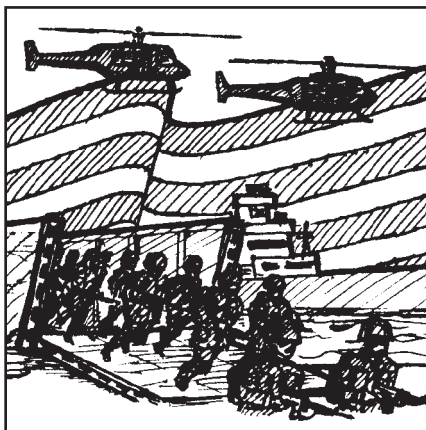
The US conducts programs like Balikatan jointly with 150 countries throughout the world. Actually, many of these have been direct military operations of US forces against the internal enemies of those hosting the “exercises”, such as those undertaken in Haiti, Honduras, Panama, El Salvador, Argentina, Turkey, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Madagascar, Fiji, Equatorial Guinea, and presently in Colombia and the Philippines.

2 WHAT IS THE BALIKATAN 02-1?

Balikatan 02-1 is a military operation being undertaken by the forces of the AFP and the USAF in order to pursue

the Abu Sayyaf bandit group. While the Macapagal-Arroyo regime insists that this operation is an “exercise”, as far as the US is concerned, it is clear that this is an offensive operation under the framework of the US’ “war on terrorism” and the second major military project of the US following its war on Afghanistan. According to the charge d’affaires of the US embassy, Robert Fitts, Balikatan aims to wipe out the Abu Sayyaf and “terrorism” in the country.

Balikatan 02-1 was formally opened on January 31, 2002, but it actually began last February 13, after the Terms of Reference (ToR), containing its guidelines, was finalized and signed. Six hundred sixty American soldiers and 3,800 Filipino soldiers are participating in this operation. Of the 660 US soldiers, 160 are members of the US Special Operations Forces (the US forces for special operations, better known as “Green Berets”), while 500 are support personnel.



3 HOW DOES THE BALIKATAN 02-1 DIFFER FROM PAST MILITARY TRAINING EXERCISES?

Balikatan 02-1 was meant to be different from previous military training exercises. These differences reveal its true nature and objectives, as follows:

a) In the past, the military exercises were geared towards improving the tactics, coordination and maneuvers against a hypothetical threat from a common external enemy. Balikatan 02-1 is particularly aimed to quell a threat within the country, in the form of a small bandit group in Basilan, which has been declared as target of the US’ “war against terrorism”.

b) In the past, the military training only involved mock battles and the target was hypothetical. In the Balikatan 02-1 exercise,

the “exercise” participants will be brought into the midst of an actual battlefield and will use live ammunition against living targets.

c) Balikatan 02-1 will last six months instead of the usual four-week duration of previous exercises. Aside from this, 15 more Balikatan exercises are slated for this year.

Balikatan 02-1 is the first time US soldiers will be engaged in actual fighting in the Philippines since the Second World War. It is also the largest deployment of US soldiers in the battlefield after the US-UK war on Afghanistan.

4 WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SIGNED TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)?

Macapagal-Arroyo boasts of the signing of the Terms of Reference (ToR), which contains the guidelines of the Balikatan 02-1, supposedly to safeguard national sovereignty and avoid strong criticism from the patriotic and militant forces and the people. Government officials took great pains to formulate and fine-tune the ToR, but in the end it merely served as a cosmetic. Because, while the US “recognized” the “authority” of the AFP in the Balikatan, actual command over the US troops remains in the hands of the officials of the US Armed Forces. In the final analysis and more than anything else, the ToR guarantees that US interests are taken care of.



Revealing of how the US belittled the ToR, a mere minor official (Robert Fitts, the charge d’affaires of the US embassy in the Philippines) was dispatched to sign it. Macapagal-Arroyo’s wish to have it signed by US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Vice President Teofisto Guingona of the Philippines was frustrated. Assistant Foreign

Secretary for American Affairs, Minerva Falcon, was thus instead asked to sign the ToR.

Despite the efforts to use the ToR for concealment, certain provisions actually reveal the real intent of having US troops participate in the military operations against the Abu Sayyaf. The national sovereignty of the Philippines is trampled in the following provisions:

1) Section A.6 (nature of the “training”): “mutual counter-terrorism advising, assisting and training Exercise relative to Philippine efforts against the ASG (Abu Sayyaf Group), and will be conducted in the island of Basilan.”

2) Section A.6-7 (three phases of the “training”): “Only 160 US troops organized in 12-man Special Forces Teams shall be deployed with AFP field commanders (commanders in the field of combat)” in Basilan to quell the Abu Sayyaf and “shall remain at the Battalion Headquarters and, when approved, Company Tactical Headquarters” (which is the most basic tactical command center or immediate operational command); the holding of “further advising, assisting and training exercises shall be conducted in Malagutay and the Zamboanga area” and “related activities in Cebu” (carried out by 500 additional US forces).

3) Section A. 4 (respective commands): “AFP and US Unit Commanders will retain command over their respective forces” (the unit command is basic to the question of command; the added phrase “The Exercise shall be implemented jointly by RP and US Exercise Co-instructors under the authority of the Chief of Staff, AFP” is mere embellishment and no longer essential).

4) Section A.8 (pretext to fire): US forces have the “right of self-defense” (the broad definition of the US military for “self-defense” includes “active defense” or “preventive defense”; in any case, the actual intrusion and launching of military operations in the lair and sphere of operation of the Abu Sayyaf is no less than an invitation to be fired upon—and to fire back.)

In the past, US troops have never respected any “joint chain of command.” They have been launching unilateral operations under their own command, including flying war planes on their own, in blatant violation of the guidelines of the VFA and other agreements. In the final analysis, for US troops, the mission order from the highest command of the USAF is most decisive.



Nowhere in the text of the ToR can one find the more important matters—such as the prohibition against extending the military operations to fight the NPA and the MILF. Such was supposedly in the transcriptions of the ten-minute telephone conversation between US Secretary of State Colin Powell and Vice President Teofisto Guingona.

5 WHAT IS THE U.S.' AGENDA BEHIND BALIKATAN 02-1?

The plan to continually deploy large numbers of US troops—actually, for basing in the Philippines—and the outright, direct US intervention in the internal affairs of the country, is the real reason behind Balikatan 02-1 and subsequent Balikatan exercises.

It is part of the US' "foreign internal defense" program, the principal function of the US Special Forces, that is usually coursed through the Joint Cooperative Exercises Training (JCET) program. This role was specified in the Doctrine for Special Forces Operations, to wit: "organize, train, advise and help" military forces of other countries in order "to free and protect their interests from subversion, lawlessness and insurrection." It moreover contains three components: "indirect support," "direct non-combat support," and "combat operations." For its "foreign internal defense" program in the Philippines, US imperialism aims to directly confront the New People's Army (NPA) and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

It is also a feature of the US strategic plan since 1995 for the widespread deployment of its military forces in the Asia-Pacific. Based on this plan, the US intends to deploy approximately 100,000 troops in the Asia-Pacific on a permanent basis. At present, there are 88,150 US troops in military bases in Japan and South Korea and the 7th Fleet of the US Pacific Command. After the military bases agreement was junked in 1991, the US has been employing various means and justifications to continue utilizing the Philippines as a base for its operations and other military needs.

The deployment and basing of forces in the Philippines is also part of the present thrust of US imperialism to deploy and strengthen

the “forward stationed and deployed forces”, “forward deterrent forces”, and “forward combat and expeditionary forces” of the US in various countries of the world, especially where US interests are threatened. In this regard, the US is establishing the most number of bases in different countries of the world, whether in the form of bases with permanent infrastructure, or through agreements for “access rights” (rights to land and headquarter). The use of “access rights” is the means employed by US to be able to bring in its own troops in countries where it does not have permanent military bases but are party to such agreements.

The US is carrying out the widespread establishment of many new military bases in various countries under the aegis of the “borderless war” against “terrorists” wherever in the world they may be. In the course of its war of aggression in Afghanistan, the US was able to set up new permanent and temporary military bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgystan, Pakistan and India.

6 WHAT IS THE JOINT COOPERATIVE EXERCISES TRAINING (JCET)?

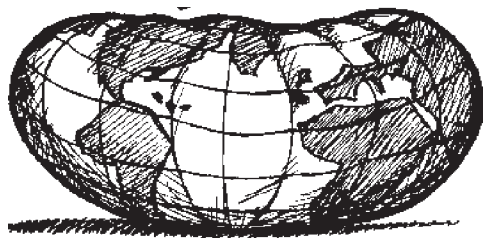
The US launched the Joint Cooperative Exercises Training (JCET) program in order to tighten military-to-military relations with its neo-colonies and allies after the end of the Cold War. This has become the key instrument of the US to train, develop and assist puppet and allied armed forces, and to bring or sneak in the US Special Forces (like the Green Berets, Delta Force, Navy SEALs and others) in puppet and allied countries, such as the Philippines. Their proliferation coincided with and filled in for the large cutbacks in civilian financial aid and the withdrawal of permanent military bases in many countries. It also became the main instrument to propagate the aggressive and militarist foreign policy of the US and to carry out the “foreign internal defense” of the US in various parts of the world.

There have been many disclosures and notorious cases of violations of human rights and other interests of the people, which were committed by the JCET and US Special Forces in the countries

where training and operations have been held. But neither the Pentagon, the US Congress nor the US President had investigated them because a 1991 US law exempts the US Special Forces from review and many types of restrictions from Congress and even from the White House.

7 WHAT REORIENTATION HAS BEEN CARRIED OUT IN THE DEPLOYMENT OF U.S. TROOPS?

After the September 11 attack in New York, the US undertook a reorientation of its global military posture. The September 2001 Quadrennial Defense Review of the US identifies as key to this reorientation the strengthening of its “forward stationed and deployed forces” (forces stationed and deployed in bases outside the US or where the enemy is present or is nearest). The US has already abandoned its old orientation of defense against threats from the Soviet Union. According to the new orientation, which is geared towards immediately confronting and directly countering the various threats to US interests wherever they may come from, the US needs to deploy and to strengthen its “forward deterrence forces” (forces to deter threats from the enemy) in order to preempt these threats. Related to this is the deployment and strengthening of “forward combat and expeditionary forces” (combat and expeditionary forces in other countries) to swiftly respond to and pre-empt any threat and quell any enemy attack from anywhere in the world. Contained within this new orientation is the present intervention of US troops and their actual participation in a “war against terrorism” in the Philippines.



8 HOW DOES U.S. IMPERIALISM JUSTIFY ITS NEW ARMED INTERVENTION IN THE PHILIPPINES?

Last January 31, US President Bush arrogantly declared that, “If others (other countries) will not act (against ‘terrorism’), America will.” He also threatened war against North Korea, Iraq and Iran (which he branded “the Axis of Evil”), countries with a record of fighting the US and resisting the imposition of US imperialist control.

The US wants to take advantage of the momentum of its war of aggression in Afghanistan to carry out its “borderless war” against “terrorists,” and to remove the obstacles and threats to the maintenance and further expansion of its hegemonic and monopoly-capitalist interests. It is taking advantage of the situation to ruthlessly trample upon the sovereignty and independence of countries and the principles of international relations as governed by international treaties. The US is wielding its imperialist power to the hilt in the economic, political and military spheres in order to coerce other countries to “assist” its war of aggression and its expansion to other parts of the world.

In the Philippines, US imperialism is riding on the widespread anger of the people against the Abu Sayyaf bandit group and disgust with the inutility of the AFP, in order to expand the target of the military operations of US troops and to justify its armed intrusion and the aggressive assertion of its imperialist superiority and interests over various countries, as the sole superpower in the world.

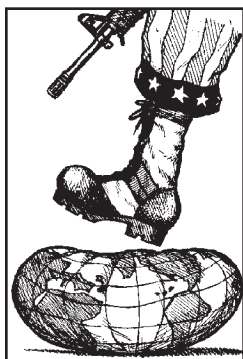
9 WHAT ACTIONS OF THE MACAPAGAL-ARROYO REGIME ATTEMPT TO CIRCUMVENT THE ILLEGALITY OF THE ARMED INTERVENTION OF U.S. TROOPS?

The regime insists that the MDT and the VFA serve as bases for the Balikatan, but even in these agreements there are no provisions allowing US soldiers to undertake, much less participate in, combat operations within the country. Even the Supreme Court decision in support of the VFA provides that the US troops may only stay temporarily for rest or for training but for approximately only four

weeks. Furthermore, these agreements do not allow foreign troops to fire back in self-defense even under attack by a common enemy of the AFP and the USAF.

Even under the framework of the reactionary constitution and laws, the armed intrusion of the US, and relatedly the Balikatan 02-1 are considered illegal. The constitution of the reactionary government disallows foreign military bases, troops and facilities inside the country, unless otherwise allowed under a treaty ratified by the senate.

When Macapagal-Arroyo visited the US in October-November 2001, she secretly schemed with Bush to allow the armed interven-



tion of US troops into the country in the form of a series of Balikatan exercises. Prior to this (in September 2001), meetings and ground-work were undertaken by the Department of Defense of the Philippines and the Asia-Pacific Command of the US Armed Forces.

In order to force a legal basis for the Balikatan 02-1 according to Macapagal-Arroyo's agreement with Bush, the regime attempted to slip through the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA), an agreement which they dubbed as simply an "arrangement" between the defense departments and armed forces of the US and the Philippines, in order to avoid the need to have it ratified by the Philippine Senate. The MLSA was signed by Gen. Diomedio Villanueva as chief of staff of the AFP and Adm. Dennis Blair as commander-in-chief of the USAF Pacific Command.

In reality, the MLSA is just a new name for the Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA), which was first proposed in 1992 but for which the US and successive puppet regimes failed to get Senate approval because of protests by the people and the opposition.

Under the MLSA, the government of the Philippines would grant the US military forces "access rights" or rights to use any facility, anywhere in the Philippines, at any time and for an indefinite duration. This redounds to granting US military troops liberty to make

a big military base out of the entire Philippines.

Up to the last moment, Malacañang kept the MLSA under wraps. But because of the intense criticism and protest of the people, including a number from the reactionary opposition, the regime was constrained to reveal the signed document, claiming that it is a mere “draft”. Thus, the regime has been unable to use the agreement in order to legitimize the entry of foreign troops into the country and has to resort to inventing various other legal loopholes.

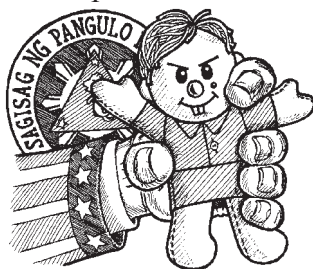


Macapagal-Arroyo brusquely derided those opposed to Balikatan 02-1. Aping her imperialist master who divided the world between pro-terrorists and anti-terrorists, Macapagal-Arroyo branded those opposed to Balikatan 02-1 as “un-Filipino”, “defenders of terrorists, business partners of murderers, and lovers of the Abu Sayyaf.” In truth, it is she who is doggedly pro-imperialist and a traitor to the Filipino people. It is she who has covered up for the high officials of the AFP who have been protecting the Abu Sayyaf, colluding with them and sharing in the ransom of the hostages, and allowing them to evade entrapment and rout. Because of the earlier objections of Vice President and Foreign Secretary Teofisto Guingona to the Balikatan 02-1, Macapagal-Arroyo also clipped his powers related to monitoring the presence and conduct of US troops in the country.

10 WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF BALIKATAN 02-1 AND THE U.S.’ “BORDERLESS WAR” ON THE SOVEREIGNTY AND SECURITY OF THE PHILIPPINES?

The implementation of the Balikatan 02-1 flagrantly violates the sovereignty of the Philippines. The Macapagal-Arroyo regime’s advocacy of the armed intrusion of US imperialism into the country

with the pretext that this will resolve the Abu Sayyaf problem is a total surrender of the right of the Filipino nation to self-determination and its own resolution of internal matters. Instead of championing Philippine national interest as the main principle, the regime now upholds as fundamental policy the “war against terrorism”, tying the hands of the Philippines to the “borderless war” and other policies dictated by the US.



The ToR referred to the Balikatan 02-1 as relative to the government’s efforts against the Abu Sayyaf. Nevertheless, this forebodes a wider and more serious US imperialist armed intervention in the country, especially as the US has vilified as “terrorist” the revolutionary movement led by the CPP. Defense Secretary Angelo Reyes himself had said the next project of the US armed forces would be to confront the New People’s Army as soon as they are done with the Abu Sayyaf.

11

WHAT ARE ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT?

The US armed intervention in the Philippines will have deep and long-term implications on the revolutionary movement, the situation and its tasks:

a. US imperialist armed intervention in the country places a big obstacle to the continuation of the NDFP-GRP peace talks, which the Macapagal-Arroyo regime itself has continually been stalling since the middle of 2001. Because of the regime’s flagrant violation of national sovereignty, the National Council of the NDFP is seriously considering whether or not it is still worthwhile to negotiate with the regime. The Balikatan 02-1 and other related policies are even graver violations of national sovereignty than the VFA, which was the basis for the NDFP’s pull-out from the peace talks in 1999.

b. The more serious implication of Balikatan 02-1 is the threat of an even bigger and more serious US armed aggression

wherein it is no longer the Abu Sayyaf but the New People's Army (NPA) and the revolutionary movement that would be the main targets. US imperialism and the puppet Macapagal-Arroyo regime are merely using the Abu Sayyaf as pretext in order to bring back the US troops to directly help in fighting the armed revolution in the country, that is growing in breadth and strength.

c. The direct, armed intervention of the US in the Philippines illustrates the issue of continuous US imperialist domination of the Philippines. The present explosive issue of the Balikatan 02-1 is an excellent opportunity to propel a mass campaign and education-propaganda campaign on the matter and to raise the anti-imperialist consciousness and struggle of the people, in combination with their struggles against the other basic problems

at the root of their impoverishment and oppression, prepare them for even higher forms of struggle and bring them to the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. It also creates a condition to broaden the united front and raise it to the level of anti-imperialism. Even the reactionary ruling class is not entirely united on the issue of direct intervention of US troops in the Philippines.



12 HOW WILL WE RESIST U.S. ARMED INTERVENTION?

The Executive Committee of the Central Committee of the Party declares:

“Threats from imperialists, reactionaries and militarists fail to daunt the Party and the revolutionary movement. Consequent to the victorious completion of the Second Great Rectification Movement, the Party and the revolutionary movement are stronger, more consolidated and possess a clearer grasp of the requisites of advancing the people's democratic revolution against local and foreign enemies. The entire Party is united and determined to lead the people in utmost resistance to armed intervention and threats of armed aggres-

sion from US imperialism. The New People's Army has been tried and tempered in more than 30 years of waging a life-and-death struggle."

The Executive Committee of the Central Committee has laid out the urgent tasks of the Party and the revolutionary movement to continuously wage all-out resistance against US armed intervention in the country:

1. Immediately we must put stress on broadening and intensifying mass protests and the propaganda movement. Arouse and mobilize the broad masses of the people to assail, oppose and resist US armed intervention and threats of armed aggression.

2. Expose, resist and isolate the puppet and reactionary Macapagal-Arroyo regime. Concentrate our strongest blow against Macapagal-Arroyo and the militarists headed by Angelo Reyes due to their outright puppetry and treachery to the people. They must be condemned as the most nefarious elements of reactionary politics.

3. Broaden and strengthen the anti-imperialist united front. Persevere in pursuing linkages and alliances with forces and elements that advocate various levels of anti-imperialism and uphold national sovereignty and independence. Build the broadest possible alliances against imperialist intervention and aggression.

4. Intensify the revolutionary armed struggle nationwide. Make the reactionaries pay dearly, strengthen further the armed revolutionary movement, encourage and support different forms of struggle, and prepare the minds and organizations of the masses and the revolutionary movement for a life-and-death struggle against imperialist aggression.

5. Broaden and deepen the underground movement in the cities and the countryside. We must seriously confront threats of imperialist aggression even as we determinedly resist and frustrate it on all fronts—legal and illegal, armed and unarmed.

6. Broaden and strengthen international support against imperialist intervention and threats of aggression.

